

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH



Working with you to keep you covered.

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The term "Neighbourhood Watch" is merely one of many terms used to assemble a co-operative involvement of the citizens of a Community with Police Forces of that community in the prevention of crime.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Objective of Neighbourhood Watch

The primary objective of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme is simply to involve the community of a given area in co-ordination with local police to monitor criminal activity in that area by being aware of what is going on around them, taking greater interest in their responsibility to the community as a whole and by being made aware of their potential as preventers of crime.

DEPARTMENT OF PROTECTION SERVICES

PINETOWN

The whole success of Neighbourhood Watch is based on two conditions. The first is community involvement and enthusiasm and secondly, liaison between the Watch and Local Police officials.

This objective will be realised by making the community as a whole

- (a) take a greater interest and responsibility in going on around them especially in their immediate neighbourhood
- (b) become aware of their collective potential as preventers of crime.

PINETOWN, NATAL

BRIEF HISTORY OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH OVERSEAS

The concept of Neighbourhood Watch was born in the United States of America where it initially took the form of "vigilante" groups in a local area who took to patrolling their streets to combat crime.

In 1983, Neighbourhood Watch was introduced into the United Kingdom where several modifications were made as the American Watches were considered too militant by the British public and authorities alike.

The first Neighbourhood Watch scheme was set up by a Sergeant MacKenzie of Tooting Police Division in Autumn 1983 as a result of an elderly man being assaulted by a burglar in his house in Kenlor Road. The neighbourhood were outraged, sympathetic and shocked at this crime. Sergeant MacKenzie realizing that neighbours needed to focus on something collectively, having heard about the American Neighbourhood Watch, went to his Inspector with the idea.

In just a year, 65 Watches had been formed involving some 1 400 households. In about three years, 190 Watches involving 6 368 households were in operation in Sergeant MacKenzie's area.

The British Home Office conducted a survey called "Taking account of crime: Key findings from 1984 Crime survey" in which 11 000 people were asked amongst other things whether they would join a Neighbourhood Watch.

It was found that highest support for Neighbourhood Watch was from persons of the higher income bracket living in modern family houses and young families living in outer suburban houses.

Other keen areas were from those living in terraced houses and the better-off Council Estates.

The lowest level of support was from agricultural areas and houses that were occupied by non-owners.

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In short, it was found that home owners are more likely to support this scheme than tenants and families more than divorced or separated people.

Today there are nearly 5 000 Neighbourhood Watch schemes in London and according to Commander Roach of Scotland Yard, there are as many as 200 schemes being set up each month.

From these figures it can be seen that Neighbourhood Watch has been an overwhelming success in London and it is gaining momentum daily.

Nearly all persons involved in the London schemes have commented on the change of atmosphere in the neighbourhoods. Barriers have been broken down between neighbours, bridges have been built between public and police and a general caring attitude has developed in these neighbourhoods.

REPORTED SUCCESS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH OVERSEAS

The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme has been accepted and recognized in London by at least one Insurance Company. Royal Insurance (United Kingdom) launched a Household Policy in April 1986 and offered a 5% discount for homeowners who are members of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

REDUCTION IN CRIME RATE

In the Balham area of London, a reduction of 35% in the crime rate was noted by the Police Division which has been directly accredited to the success of Neighbourhood Watch.

The Cheshire Police have told a story of how they drove two apprehended criminals round the country to find out where they had "done their jobs". As they passed the boundary of a place called Mollington, the Police were told by the criminals that they never touch that area as it is a "Home Watch area".

The latest known figure for Neighbourhood Watches in the United Kingdom is 9 000 and together with the many stories of success in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world, it can only be said that a severe blow has been struck against crime.

NEED FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the times we live in, crime is ever on the increase, particularly domestic crimes and violence, sexual assault, housebreaking and theft. The victims of these crimes are mostly urban homeowners whose only hard earned possessions are those in and around their properties. Short Term Insurance Premiums are constantly being increased, thereby taking the protection they offer further out of the financial reach of the average homeowner.

The common enemy is the opportunist burglar who "stalks his prey" and "cases the joint" behind the veil of innocence. The need for the community to group together and present a common front to these villains is far overdue. Neighbourhood Watch will present a network of surveillance that will result in the arrest of many an opportunist if run correctly.

A report released in the Wednesday, 25th February 1987 edition of the Mercury, has quoted the Minister of Law and Order, Mr. Adriaan Vlok, as saying that 8 people will die, nearly 50 be assaulted and 3 raped in Durban and surrounding areas in one day. This speaks for itself. The Minister goes on to say that 25 homes are robbed in one day in Durban and surrounding areas. The Daily News reported on the same subject:

"Pinetown continues to be a high crime incident area topping the figures for all Police Stations in the region - particularly with economic crimes."

The crime wave has been attributed to three major factors, namely:

The economic slump

The resultant unemployment

The abuse by criminals of unrest situations

Although the crime rate is high and it is the opportunist and premeditated criminal who are ultimately responsible for the acts of crime committed, they are not totally to blame for this state of affairs. The other side of the coin is the "passiveness" and lack of foresight displayed by the average South African homeowner. For so long he has enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence and has been lulled into a false sense of security which manifests an attitude of "it won't happen to me."

The criminal is counting on that attitude and is searching for "open doors" and "easy jobs". This is where the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is going to count.

The urgent need for Neighbourhood Watch was demonstrated recently in Pinetown, Natal, when at two Public Meetings, 115 Neighbourhood Watch Committees were initiated. Since then, 2 additional committees are being established each week.

LAUNCHING OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WITH THE BACKING OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In order to implement the Neighbourhood Watch concept it is imperative that it has the total backing of the general public as well as Business and Commerce. It is therefore necessary to sell the idea to the public at large, demonstrating how all can benefit from this system at little or no cost to themselves.

Method of Implementation

The support and official backing of its Local Authority must be obtained.

A Meeting should be convened at one of the Civic Halls to which the residents should be invited. The Mayor of the Town or City should be invited to open the Meeting. Following an introduction by the Town Clerk, the Meeting should be addressed on the following subjects:

- The residents be informed of the current situation with regard to urban crime by an authority on the subject, statistics and cases to be quoted. This should be a member of the South African Police.
- The residents should be informed of the cost caused by incidents of breaking in and entering, theft, robbery, etc. This should be done by an Insurance Advisor who has figures on claims made in the area. He can show how a concept such as Neighbourhood Watch can effect the Insurance Industry in reducing claims, etc.
- A member of a Security Association of South Africa should be invited to address the Meeting with regard to domestic security and how Neighbourhood Watch lends itself to this end.

Media Coverage

In order to gain maximum exposure, the Media should be informed of such a Meeting and the necessary notices printed in good time. The subjects to be discussed should also be made known.

Recruiting of Watch Commanders

At the Residents Meeting, Watch Commanders should be recruited. Relevant application forms should be handed to those persons wishing to be considered as Watch Commanders for their street or block of flats. Those Commanders will, in conjunction with members of the Local Authority, form the said Committees.

Should a community not have the backing of its Local Authority for the implementation of a Neighbourhood Watch, the way to implement Watches would be through the relevant Residents Association. This has been seen to work in Marina da Gama, Cape, and Johannesburg North, Transvaal.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The key words in the functioning of Neighbourhood Watch are COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION and CO-OPERATION.

Watches will be organised into streets, street blocks or sections of a street and blocks of flats will also be included.

Each Watch will have a Watch Commander whose function will be to recruit other residents in the street or block of flats to join the Watch.

Thereafter, the Watch Commander will co-ordinate the Watch and chair local meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest in the area of residential security.

Due to the topography, street design and diverse shapes of plots, it is difficult to calculate the exact size and area of each Neighbourhood Watch at this stage. Each Watch will have to be assessed individually and with the assistance of Watch Commanders and local residents, the correct size and structure of each Watch will be found to suit the area.

Area Commanders will be introduced, whose function it will be to co-ordinate the Watches within a given area, for example, a suburb or section of a suburb. The area Commanders' task will also be to represent his or her area at the Neighbourhood Watch Sub-Committee Meetings which will be held from time to time.

Should a Local Authority be involved in the Neighbourhood Watch of its area, a large pin-map should be started showing:

1. Watch Commanders residences
2. Watch members residences
3. Area Watch Commanders residences
4. Boundary lines of each Area Watch

This will assist greatly with the planning of this venture.

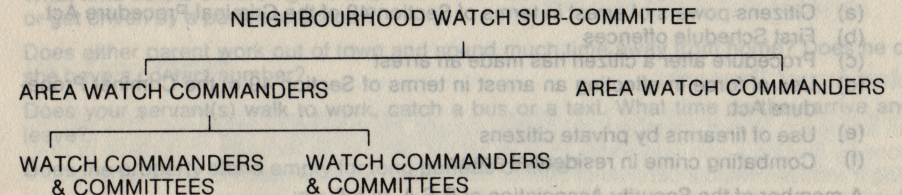
The use of Computerisation by the Local Authority can be of great use in the implementation of Neighbourhood Watch in that a vast amount of ready information can be stored such as:

- Names and addresses of Area Watch Commanders
- Watch Commanders
- Watch Members
- Safe Houses
- Doctors and Nurses in Watch
- Policemen and S.A. Defence Force members
- Other talents in Watch

Movement of persons, i.e. away on business or holiday.

Any other relevant information required by Watch to be recorded.

A Committee and system for co-ordination in a Local Authority area consisting of Watch Commanders, the Town Clerk, Chief of Protection Services or Chief Traffic Officer, Station Commander, South African Police, and the undermentioned system of co-ordination is recommended.



NOTES FOR WATCH COMMANDERS

It must be realised by the Watch Commander that the total success of the Neighbourhood Watch in his or her area is largely dependant on the collective enthusiasm of his neighbours. It is a scheme designed for the community and to be run by the community.

The Watch Commanders, after having canvassed his neighbourhood and received a positive response, the neighbours need to get together under the Commanders guidance and get to know one another. This in most cases will break a lot of ice and clear up many misunderstandings that have existed in the neighbourhood. It is these areas of indifference and minor misunderstandings that have separated neighbourhoods to the advantage of the criminal elements instead of uniting them.

ASSISTANT WATCH COMMANDERS

In the event of the Watch Commander being indisposed due to him being away on vacation or business, the Watch needs a co-ordinator. Therefore one or more Assistant Watch Commanders should be nominated to assist in such cases.

SAFE HOUSES

A Safe House is a house within a Watch which is occupied by a responsible person during most of the day. Usually the person will be a housewife, self employed at home or a pensioner.

The Watch Commander should establish at least two Safe Houses in his or her Watch.

The function of a Safe House is for people to know that they can go somewhere when there is a problem at home, for example should a child return from school and discover the front door of their house ajar and suspect a burglar is inside, they will go to the Safe House for protection.

Should a member of the Watch be involved in an accident and wish to get in touch with their next-of-kin who are not at home, they know that the safe House is occupied.

The Safe House will be identifiable by a sign at the gate or on the fence.

Having set up a Committee and held an initial Meeting, the Watch Commander should make contact with his or her Local Authority, Police Station or Residents Association in order to ask for speakers to be arranged to address the Committee.

Speakers on the following subjects should be invited to give an informal talk to the neighbourhood, thereby assisting them to formulate a security strategy in the Watch area:

1. A member of Local Authority or overseeing authority to talk on:
The relationship between the Neighbourhood Watch and the Local Authority.
2. A member of the South African Police Force to talk on:
 - (a) Citizens powers of arrest in terms of Section 42 of the Criminal Procedure Act.
 - (b) First Schedule offences
 - (c) Procedure after a citizen has made an arrest
 - (d) Use of force in effecting an arrest in terms of Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act.
 - (e) Use of firearms by private citizens
 - (f) Combating crime in residential areas.
3. A member of the Security Association of R.S.A. to talk on:
 - (a) Home Security
 - (b) Security measures
 - (c) Security equipment such as Safes, burglar alarms, lighting, fences and walls.
4. A member of a Short Term Insurance Organisation to talk on:
 - (a) Short Term Household Insurance Policies.

The Watch may decide to call in a Commercial specialist to give a talk or demonstration on some specific product in the field of domestic security. (Neighbourhood Watch is not encouraged to become a promotional market for commercial outlets as this will distract from the main objectives).

Participation by Private Institutions / Commercial Organisations

Should a private institution/commercial organisation wish to associate itself with Neighbourhood Watch in the area of sponsorship, it would be encouraged on the understanding that Neighbourhood Watch has no commercial or industrial interests but a purely residential function seeking product knowledge to improve the quality of life of its members.

Having obtained a number of residents names (at least 50% to 60% of the Watch area), the Commander will be required to gather information from the potential members.

Particulars of Neighbours

If successful, surveillance is to be implemented in an area, the first step is to establish where everybody is, how to contact them, what are the normal movements of people. In the Watch, once this is established, the usual occurrences and strangers can be identified more easily.

It is suggested that the following information be gathered by the Watch Commander:

1. Names and addresses of members of watch to include wives, children and live-in servants.
2. Place of work of husbands and wives
3. Telephone numbers of husband and wife at work
4. Schools that children go to, class and teacher's name
5. Home address of servant(s)
6. Dogs on property (type)
7. Motor vehicles normally kept on property, makes, colour and registration numbers

Movement of persons

Does anyone normally stay at the house during the day, i.e. old folk, housewife or servant? If so, who and what hours.

What time does the husband usually go to work and return home and in which car?

What time does the wife usually go and return from work and in which car?

What time do the children go to and return from school? Do they walk, cycle, catch a bus or get driven by a parent to school?

Does either parent work out of town and spend much time away from home? Does he or she have a contact number?

Does your servant(s) walk to work, catch a bus or a taxi. What time do they arrive and leave?

Does the property stand empty for long periods of time?

Particulars of Property

Plot number of property.

Is the property fully fenced, can one see into the property over or through the fence?

Is the property surrounded by other occupied plots or is there an open area, bush or some other unoccupied land nearby?

Does the house have a burglar alarm? If so, is it always switched on?

Do all your windows have burglar guards?

If you have dogs, are they allowed to roam around the whole of the property or are they restricted to a certain area?

Has the house ever been broken into before? If so, how did the burglars gain access and has this been rectified since?

Does your house have outside security lighting?

Is there sufficient street lighting outside?

Do you have a clear view of the road way from inside your house?

Are you prepared to allow your house to be a safe house?

Conclusion

Once most of these questions have been answered by the potential members of the Watch, the Commander will have a reasonable idea of the patterns of movement in the watch area and the security level of most households and can start to plan and build up an effective Neighbourhood Watch together with the neighbours in that area.

This information is private and confidential and so should be held only by approved Watch Commanders for security reasons.

Sign Posting

Much of the war waged against the residential criminal is psychological. Having ensured that all the doors that were left open for him are closed, the Watch Commander should set about sign posting his area in the following way:

1. Large Boards indicating that one is entering a Neighbourhood Watch area should be erected at all the access points to the Watch after obtaining the necessary permission from the Local Authority.
2. Small Neighbourhood Watch boards (about 20 cm x 20 cm) should be placed on the fence or wall of properties involved in the Watch scheme.

3. Neighbourhood Watch Stickers (about 12 cm x 18 cm) should be placed on windows or some visible place on the side of the house.
4. The Watch Commander and Assistant Watch Commanders houses and Safe Houses should be sign posted as in item (2).

Marking of Property

All articles in Watch members properties should be marked or engraved. This can be done by placing a non-removable transfer on the items in an inconspicuous place or marking it with an invisible ultra violet marker. The use of an electrical engraver will be useful for garden furniture and tools, etc.

The purpose of marking property is two-fold. Firstly it has a big psychological effect on the criminal in that he is in possession of "hot property". Should he be stopped and questioned he does not want the Police to know the property is stolen.

Secondly, the property is identifiable for recovery purposes.

Theft of bicycles from schools is a major problem in certain areas. Bicycles ought to be marked with suitable identification marks known to the Watch Commander and a sticker displayed on the cycle to say that it is a Neighbourhood Watch bicycle.

Telephone Chain

The Watch Commander and his Committee should introduce an information card on which is all the relevant information of each Neighbour such as home and business telephone numbers, addresses and those of the local Emergency Services.

A telephone chain should be set up so that should a message need to be relayed around the Watch, the commander only needs to phone one number to start the chain phoning. This will cut down on his expenses and save him phoning 18 to 20 numbers every time he needs to.

Information concerning suspicious persons in the area can be passed on in the same manner. The use of Citizen band Radios could prove useful in this area.

Plan of Neighbourhood

A small plan of the neighbourhood should be compiled reflecting the following:

1. Properties that are walled, fenced or open
2. Areas of uncontrolled bush
3. Street lights
4. The position of houses showing access points, etc.
5. Which houses have burglar alarms or panic buttons
6. Which houses have swimming pools.

This plan will give the Watch an overall view of their area collectively, thereby showing up the vulnerable points through which the criminal element might penetrate.

Day to day running of the Watch

Having completed the ground work of the Watch, it is now necessary to establish a day to day routine for the Watch.

At this stage it will be seen that a 24 hour period falls into two categories, namely:

Day time Watch

Night time Watch

Day Time Watch

The day watch is the period when most of the members of the Watch have gone to work and the neighbourhood is largely inhabited by housewives, pensioners and servants.

At this time it is vitally important that the Watch continues to function, therefore the Watch Commander must ensure that those in the Day Time Watch know what is expected of them should an incident arousing suspicion take place in any of the houses.

This will largely be dependent on domestic servants. Is each domestic servant fully trustworthy and does each employer know their identification numbers and home addresses?

Those houses with no domestic servants should be equipped with burglar alarms and dogs and a procedure implemented as to the type of action to be taken should an alarm be triggered off.

In order to prevent unnecessary reaction by false alarms, this should also be dealt with in the procedure.

Should an alarm be triggered off during the day, the person reporting it should contact any known male Watch members who may be at home. The house involved should be approached cautiously and checked thoroughly externally for signs of breaking and entering. If such signs are detected, the Police notified immediately. Should the suspects be seen fleeing, a concise description should be recorded for the Police. The rest of the Watch should keep surveillance from a safe place to get a glimpse of the accused as well.

Night Time Watch

During the Night Watch, most families are at home. At this time should an alarm be triggered off in a car parked on the road or a house, the person making the report should immediately inform the Watch Commander or his assistant.

The Watch Commander will start a telephone chain, alerting the whole Watch. Upon being alerted, the Watch should go into a surveillance mode and keep an eye out for any persons seen fleeing from the house. A description should be taken together with the direction of flight reported to the Watch Commander.

The Watch Commander, together with some men should approach the home or car and ascertain if a break-in has taken place, as in the Day Time Watch.

Should it be positive, all information should be gathered and reported to the Police as soon as possible for action.

Should a citizens arrest be made, the relevant provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act should be strictly adhered to.

Vacant Houses

When members of the Watch vacate their houses for business purposes or holidays, they should notify the Watch Commander well in advance. At a Committee Meeting a surveillance routine should be implemented to protect the house. This should include the following:

1. Daily patrols and checks made of the house and property by members, inside and outside.
2. Someone must take in the mail, rubbish bags and newspapers.
3. Lights switched on in the evening to give an appearance of occupation.
4. If the owner is away for a long time, the grass should be cut.
5. Anyone seen taking more than casual interest in the vacant property should be treated as suspicious and questioned about their intentions. A note should be made of their general description for further reference, if necessary.
6. The Watch Commander should appoint a key holder for the vacant house or keep the keys himself for the daily checks.
7. It is advisable to have a burglar alarm and light fitted to a house should it be left vacant for long periods of time. This assists a Watch in detecting anything unusual occurring in that property.

Record keeping

Part of good Police Work is to keep records and so build up a data bank of information which will reveal patterns and trends if studied closely.

The Neighbourhood Watch should develop a habit of noting times and descriptions of outside persons entering the area such as work seekers and persons strolling up and down the streets. These records will reveal a time pattern when the street is most busy with outsiders. Should the same people be seen in the area over an extended period of time and no one in the Watch knows them, then suspicion is aroused as to their real intentions and further investigations made.

Records of all Burglaries, Break-ins, thefts and other crimes should be kept. This will enable the success of Neighbourhood Watch to be monitored and comparisons made.

"Cry Wolf"

The story of Peter and the Wolf has a very relevant truth for Neighborhood Watch in that too many false alarms to the Police and authorities can be the cause of them failing to respond with the degree of speed and urgency the situation demands. It is therefore necessary for Watch Commanders to satisfy themselves that the Police are genuinely required to respond.

If one multiplies this situation by three hundred Watches in a large town, it could have a negative effect on the Police response if not handled responsibly.

Sponsorship

There is obviously a certain amount of expense involved in Stationery, signs and stickers, etc. These items should be financed through commercial sponsorship by Companies and Organisations wishing to promote residential security.

Neighbourhood Watch is for the Community and run by the Community. It's success is dependant on the enthusiasm and commitment of the residents themselves.